

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

## SOCIALISM.

**CONTEMPORARY SOCIALISM.** By JOHN RAE, M. A. Crown Svo., pp. xii, 435. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mr. Rae's lively appreciation of the social dangers of which his book furnishes a warning does not prevent his writing in a moderate, judicious, and candid temper. He recognizes the sincerity of the party whose fallacies it is his object to expose, and he is ready to admit the justice of many of their complaints; while in surveying the present condition and prospects of the social conflict he shows no susceptibility to exaggerated alarms. His caution and equanimity make his conclusions all the more impressive. He reminds us in his introduction that the only type of socialism which retains vitality in our day is that of the democratic revolution. The philanthropic and experimental forms, represented by various "communities," to which America has given a ready hospitality, and connected very often with religious ideas, are practically extinct; but political socialism after a long period of quiescence, has reappeared with a great deal of the destructive and furious strength of the French revolutionary era, and presents itself now only in its most violent aspect. It is no longer a scheme of economical reform; it is a project of sweeping organic change. It proposes to reconstitute society entirely in the interests of the laboring classes. This must be done by the agency of the State; and the first step therefore is to overthrow the existing order and re-establish the State upon the exclusive basis of labor. No citizen shall then enjoy without laboring, no citizen shall labor without enjoying; the land and the instruments of production shall be the common property of all who labor; the wealth of the Nation shall be enjoyed by those who have made it by the work of their hands; and the State being only the organized will of the people—that is, of the laboring class, which is a majority of the people—shall undertake the redistribution and administration of property under the new system. The essence therefore of contemporary socialism, "the Revolutionary Socialist Democracy," is its invocation of the power of the State to promote the material interest of the laboring class as against all other classes. Indeed it is only to the laboring class, using that designation in its familiar restricted sense, that socialism concedes any social or political rights at all. In respect to its theories of administration the socialist democracy may be divided into two main branches; one which predominates in Germany, aims at a strong centralized government; the other seeks a more or less loose form of federalism, with a marked tendency toward "anarchy," or the abolition of all superior government, and is a favorite ideal in France, in Spain, and among the nihilists of Russia. Nihilism is in fact only an extreme phase of socialism, and has repeatedly been preached by some of the Socialists of Germany.

The connection between socialism and atheism is a significant symptom upon which Mr. Rae lays not too much stress. What he says of the more violent Socialists of Germany is true in some degree of the party generally. "Attacks on religion, patriotism, the family, are very usual accessories of their practical agitations everywhere. As institutions and beliefs are seen to lend strength to each other, set on edge against one are easily brought to gash at all." Wilhelm Marr, who was one of the principal literary apostles of German socialism some years ago, and the founder of "Young Germany" in Switzerland, wrote: "We are content to lay down the foundation of the revolution. We shall have deserved well if we stir hatred and contempt against all existing institutions. We make war against all prevailing ideas, of religion, of the State, of country, of patriotism. The idea of God is the keystone of a perverted civilization. It must be destroyed. The true root of liberty, of equality, of culture is atheism. Nothing must restrain the spontaneity of the human mind." Friedrich Feuerbach, whose "Religion of the Future" was a favorite and standard work with the Socialists, declared that "Man alone is our God, our father, our judge, our redeemer, our true home, our law and rule, the alpha and omega of our political, moral, public and domestic life and work. There is no salvation but by man." There is nobody above man; and there is no higher destiny for man than the gratification of his appetite for pleasure—which is a holy impulse. M. de Laveleye says of some of the socialist meetings which he attended in Spain that "they were usually held in churches withdrawn from worship," and that "from the elevation of the pulpit the orators attacked everything that used to be exalted there, God, religion, the priests, the rich. The discourses were white hot, but the audience remained calm. Many women seated on the ground working, nursing their infants, and listening with attention as to a sermon. It was the very image of '93." All over the continent the democratic sentiment is atheistic. A distinguished economist, M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, is quoted by Mr. Rae as remarking that the prevalence of socialist ideas is largely due to the decline of religious faith among the working classes. If there is only the one life, they feel they must realize their ideal here and now, and insist that in order to obtain it he is ready to establish a crushing despotism. Hence it is that on the Continent of Europe, wherever the socialist democracy has come to the front, it has proved itself more tyrannical than any form of monarchy. In England, and although the democratic spirit is increasing, there has never been any great impatience of social distinctions. In America equity has always been so much a matter of course that we have never fretted about it. But individual liberty and personal rights are cherished among us and among the race from which we sprang, with an intense and noble passion. For them we have both fought and suffered; and there must be a great, a radical change in our character, before we consent to surrender them for the benefit of any economical experiment.

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